

Author's Purpose and Tone Exercise

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage. Then circle the answer to the question about purpose or tone.

1. On average, each person in the United States and Canada uses more than 300 gigajoules (GJ, equivalent to about 60 barrels) of oil per year. By contrast, in some of the poorest countries of the world, such as Ethiopia, Nepal, and Bhutan, each person generally consumes less than 1 GJ per year.

The primary purpose of this passage is to

- a. inform.
- b. persuade.
- c. entertain.

2. The foundation of public education has always been reading, writing, and arithmetic—the “three R’s.” Yet the schools insist that students who have not mastered these fundamentals continue to take all the other subjects as well. What good does it do for young people to sit in on a history or science class if they can’t read or calculate well? Schools ought to require students who are very far behind in the fundamentals to devote all their time to the three R’s until they are at or near grade level.

The primary purpose of this passage is to

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3. (1) Eye contact, also referred to as gaze, is how and how much we look at people with whom we are communicating. (2) By maintaining our eye contact, we can tell when or whether people are paying attention to us, when people are involved in what we are saying, and whether what we are saying is eliciting feelings. (3) The amount of eye contact differs from person to person and from situation to situation. (4) Studies show that talkers hold eye contact about 40 percent of the time and listeners nearly 70 percent of the time. (5) We generally maintain better eye contact when we are discussing topics with which we are comfortable, when we are genuinely interested in a person’s comments or reactions, or when we are trying to influence the other person. (6) On the other hand, we tend to avoid eye contact when we are discussing topics that make us uncomfortable, when we lack interest in the topic or person, or when we are embarrassed, ashamed, or trying to hide something.

The primary purpose of this passage is to

- a. inform.
- b. persuade.
- c. entertain.

4. (1) Recently, my sister asked me to baby-sit her two sons for the evening. (2) I figured I would get them dinner, let them watch a little TV, and then put them to bed early. (3) The rest of the night I planned to watch TV and collect an easy twenty dollars. (4) Well, right before we sat down for a pizza dinner, Rickie let the parakeet out of its cage. (5) The dog started chasing the bird as it flew around the house, so I decided to catch it before the dog did. (6) The boys and I had the bird cornered by the fireplace when Rickie jumped for it and knocked over the hamster cage. (7) The hamsters took off under the sofa while the bird flew away. (8) Fortunately, the dog had disappeared at this point. (9) I took care of the hamsters while the boys caught the parakeet and put it back in its cage. (10) When we returned to the kitchen to eat cold pizza, I discovered why the dog had lost interest in the bird chase. (11) What was left of the pizza was lying on the floor, and tomato sauce was dripping like blood from the dog’s chin. (12) Later, when my sister returned, I took the twenty dollars and told her to get someone else next time.

The tone of this passage is

- a. humorous.
- b. warm.
- c. bitter.

5. (1) Whatever happened to the practice of saving up for what you want? (2) It seems nobody has that kind of patience any more. (3) Many Americans buy what they want when they want it and worry about paying for it later. (4) The average American spends significantly more than he or she earns, much to the enjoyment of the credit-card companies. (5) Apparently people need to reach a financial crisis before they realize that it's downright stupid to neglect balancing their budgets and saving for a rainy day.

The tone of this passage is

- a. solemn.
- b. critical.
- c. furious.

6. (1) Machines are complete mysteries to me, and this has resulted in some embarrassing service calls at my home. (2) For example, there was the time I called in a repairman because our refrigerator was too warm. (3) Imagine my humiliation when he told me that the cause of the problem was a dirty filter, which I didn't know existed and therefore hadn't cleaned even once in the two years we owned the refrigerator. (4) The best example of my brilliance with machines, however, has to be the time I called for someone to fix my washing machine. (5) The repairman's solution was simply to put the plug back in the outlet, from which it had been jarred loose by the constant vibration of the washer.

The tone of this passage is

- a. straightforward.
- b. disbelieving.
- c. self-mocking.

7. (1) Research on rats shows that when animals live in crowded conditions, they live disorderly, violent lives. (2) Humans are no different. (3) Crowded inner cities are models of lawlessness; the crowded highways of Los Angeles encourage aggression by drivers, and even shootings. (4) As our urban areas continue to grow in population density, these types of problems will surely also grow. (5) That means more family violence and more fighting over available resources. (6) The American dream will become just that—only a dream.

The tone of this passage is

- a. tolerant.
- b. pessimistic.
- c. caring.

8. (1) Those addicted to drugs and alcohol probably feel terrible about themselves—even if they don't show it—and harsh judgments only worsen their self-image. (2) What these people need are programs to help rid themselves of their addictions. (3) It is also important that we all open our hearts and minds to these troubled people. (4) Their addiction does not make them any less "children of God"; nor does it mean that they deserve to be stripped of the dignity that is the birthright of every human being. (5) We must strive to create an environment of hope and help for those who so desperately need it.

The tone of this passage is

- a. caring.
- b. informative.
- c. dramatic.

9. (1) When I was younger I thought that by this age, I would be pretty well set for life. (2) I imagined that I would have a nice house, some money in the bank, and a decent job. (3) But things haven't worked out that way at all. (4) I'm living in a one-bedroom apartment with shabby furniture and a view of a parking lot. (5) My office job is dull and unrewarding, and I bring home hardly enough to cover my rent and expenses, much less put anything away. (6) My place is so unattractive that I don't want to invite anyone over, so I'm alone most of the time. (7) Whatever dreams I had in my youth are pretty well gone now. (8) Sometimes I think about going back to school and trying to prepare for a different career, but at my age there doesn't seem to be much point in doing that. (9) I guess this is just what life had in store for me.

The tone of this passage is

- a. irritated.
- b. depressed.
- c. accusing.

10. (1) Scientists say grilling meat creates cancer-causing substances that affect the meat in two ways. (2) First, when fat drips onto the source of heat, the substances are formed and then carried up to the food by smoke. (3) They are also formed when flames touch the meat. (4) There are, however, a few ways that experts say will minimize the risk of grilling meat: (a) Use low-fat meats and nonfat sauces. (5) (b) Partially cook meat before grilling. (6) (c) Cover the grill with foil; punch holes in the foil to let fat drip down. (7) (d) Avoid fire flare-ups, which cause harmful smoke. (8) (e) Scrape off blackened material on the surface of meat before eating it. (9) (f) Don't cook out every day.

The tone of this passage is

- a. optimistic.
- b. distressed.
- c. objective.